

## Tell Me Something...

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## Tell Me Something...

by [WolfyWordWeaver](#)

### Summary

Years removed from his life as a child actor, Regulus is enjoying success in his chosen field of chemistry and in the time he spends with his boyfriend Severus. A surprise appearance by his tabloid fodder brother brings new light to their childhood and a chance for the brothers to reconcile.

### Notes

Trigger Warnings: mentions of past sexual abuse (while underaged), manipulative parents, drug/alcohol abuse, mental health issues, depression, unresolved trauma, suicide attempt, and suicidal behavior

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Regulus stared nervously at his reflection, examining every inch of his figure for any potential imperfections. His suit had been dry cleaned by the family's regular man, his hair had been neatly trimmed a couple of days ago and his hands had been properly manicured. Tonight he wouldn't need to wear his hood and gown, so he wanted to make extra sure that he looked presentable.

"You look fine," Severus stated flatly as he walked past the nervous younger man.

"I just want to make sure," he replied softly as he turned to different angles in front of the mirror. "Mother and Father will be there."

Severus came back into the room with his hands shoved deeply into the pockets of his own suit and shrugged. "Of course. But you still look fine."

Biting his lip, Regulus allowed his eyes to openly wander over the shorter man's lanky figure. They hadn't been a "thing" for very long and he was still trying to get used to the idea of it being okay to admire another man so openly. At least, it was okay in the shared space of their apartment. Severus offered a crooked grin and stepped closer, dragging a bony finger along the veins on the back of Regulus' hand.

"Be careful not to wrinkle the suit," Regulus warned before he leaned down nervously and accepted the soft kiss.

Tonight was the awards ceremony where he and Severus would be winning the university's highest honor for student research. They had spent years working to make algae-based alternatives to petroleum products far more affordable and accessible to end users, and that hard work resulted in a grant for more research on the alternatives as well as national recognition for the school. Although Regulus always hated being reminded of the fact, his success as a child actor had also helped to make the story of their work go viral.

But being pressed against his boyfriend in a gentle kiss helped him to push away those thoughts. Tonight was a celebration of countless hours studying and researching and developing together. The Regulus of five years ago would have never been able to imagine that his journey into higher education would turn out like this. He would never have imagined willingly sharing an apartment with a classmate or dating said classmate either.

"We need to get going," Severus whispered up against his lips, their hands clasped together.

"Yeah," he sighed dreamily. "Let's get going."

It was already getting too hot to comfortably walk to the nearby campus, especially in suits, so the two opted for driving over in Regulus' compact car. They held hands knowing that once they reached the arena where the ceremony would be held they wouldn't be able to show each other overt affection. The parking lot was already filled almost to capacity by the time they arrived and the two quickly made their way to the student waiting room where they greeted fellow award recipients. Valentina Greengrass waved them over and chatted excitedly about how all of her family managed to make it into town to support her and how she planned to show them a good time in the city. Horace Bones was whining about having to wear formal wear although he did agree that these outfits were more comfortable than the thin and plastic-like hoods and gowns that they were required to wear for graduation.

"Holy crap," Avery Rosier whispered as he peeked out the door. "There are more cameras and news reporters here than were even at the football games this year."

Regulus blushed as he stared at his polished shoes. He knew that everyone was staring at him until Severus cleared his throat in annoyance. Conversation quickly picked back up and Avery was joking with Juliette Travers about science never being appreciated so much until they got their own cute mascot.

"Honestly, Regulus," she teased, "I think you've done more for our science department than any

Nobel Peace Prize winner could have."

"I heard that Slughorn is starting to get pretty pissed off with how many students are signing up for his class just to ask him questions about you," Valentina added with a grin.

"Now we just need to get the president of the university to finally agree to allocate that extra money for our department and we can *finally* order some new equipment." Avery threw his head back and gave a happy sigh. "Maybe you should offer him an autographed copy of your thesis, Regulus."

He sighed in half-annoyance and gave Severus a look that clearly expressed how much he would have preferred to stay home and cuddle on the couch or bed. Unfortunately, there was no way in hell that Walburga would allow her son to sit out of an opportunity to get an award and be publicized for it.

"I'm sure bribing the president of the university with my *autograph* would work," he shot back at Avery. "The man hasn't watched anything that isn't black-and-white, so fat chance of that working."

"Just get your mom to donate a butt-load of money to our department specifically," Juliette snickered and Regulus suppressed another sigh.

He had spent years begging his mother to not do exactly that. He didn't want any whiff of favoritism to be associated with all of his hard work. After receiving his Masters degree in a couple of days he would still have a few more years of schooling to ensure his PhD.

"It's almost time," Severus cut in before the conversation could spiral even more in a direction Regulus hated.

They all got to their feet and huddled around the door to see the huge crowd. It was a relatively small gathering as most people weren't interested in the success of students from the Chemistry department, but the presence of Hollywood royalty Walburga and Orion and the crowd of press that always followed them made the school move the ceremony from the usual auditorium to the actual sports arena. There was a small selection of seats for the students and their immediate family near the front before the velvet ropes marked off the space and sectioned off a larger area for the journalists and other students interested in attending. The university had only allowed 300 tickets to be released for the event and it had sold out within an hour.

Music began playing, and Regulus quickly caught sight of his parents seated elegantly together. His mother was wearing tasteful and understated jewels to compliment her brand-name jumpsuit and Orion was wearing his favorite Armani suit with the silk imperial tie that made him a head and shoulder above others in the men's fashion world. He looked down at his own tie and wondered if maybe he should have worn a silk imperial as well. He had never felt as comfortable in the formal wear as his parents had, but he always wanted to live up to their expectations.

Especially since he had given up the prestige of acting.

Severus gave his elbow a quick squeeze before all the students were lined up and led out by a flustered Dr. Slughorn. The man was a delight to be around and work with, but he had never done well when it came to special events and especially when so many eyes were on him. The cameras and rabid journalists were doing a number on the poor man's nerves. Regulus supposed that he would have been in a similar predicament if he hadn't grown up with paparazzi as a staple of his life. The rest of the students tried to look their best for their ten seconds of glory.

Everything went according to the prescribed order and with nothing more than an inordinate amount of camera clicking until the middle of President Dumbledore's speech. As he was in the middle of extolling the dedication with which these students had fostered during their years at the university there was the sudden and shocking squeals and screams of delight that startled everyone in the room. All heads automatically turned to the back of the arena where there were now journalists moving desperately to get better pictures than their competitors and after a couple of seconds Regulus could make out the tousled black hair and trademark leather jacket that was all too familiar. He glanced nervously at his parents to see their annoyed looks, but they were too well trained to reveal those emotions openly on their faces. Following their lead, he faced forward back to the President and pretended not to notice the hubub going on behind them.

President Dumbledore tried to move forward with his speech a couple of times before the university security was able to finally get the squealing boys and girls under control. Regulus tried not to be too disappointed that his brother chose not to move into the family section of the room, but he supposed that it was the best move all things considered. They definitely didn't want any family drama during a school event.

Once things settled, the speeches continued and soon it was Regulus' turn to read his speech. Severus had flat out refused to do one as he loathed being in the public eye or in front of groups of people in general, so Regulus took the opportunity to share a few details of how hard the two of them worked on their project and how important it was to develop eco-friendly and sustainable products that were accessible to the lay person.

"It's not good enough to create alternatives to petroleum products including plastics," he stated passionately. "We need to create sustainable products in all sectors of the market and make them competitive. That's why the work that Severus and I have been doing is so important. We can prove that being considerate of the earth does not need to be something relegated to only a small percentage of the population."

He paused for the applause and grinned softly at his boyfriend. Severus had been raised in poverty and had struggled with his desire to support companies and products that were sustainably and ethically sourced. It was a major driving force in the direction they had taken their research and Regulus had been grateful to have learned a new perspective on consumerism and ethical stewardship.

Granted, he still hadn't managed to get his parents entirely on board, but they humored him well enough and he took solace in knowing that at least a portion of their money was now going to support causes more worthy than bribery and indulgent living. As he was already written into their will as the sole Heir, he also knew that one day he would have the opportunity to make the entire Black fortune useful for good.

A brief glance towards Sirius reminded him that he hadn't always been the Heir to the fortune, and he was glad that things had changed.

After all the speeches were complete, the awards were given out. Avery and Valentina were awarded with grants and scholarships to continue their research on energy efficient building materials and Juliette won an award for her work the field of organic chemistry. Regulus felt himself blush as President Dumbledore said a few kind words about the hard work he and Severus put in before he presented them with the Presidential Award for Excellence. Slughorn smiled widely and congratulated them both as he pinned the medallions to their lapels and offered up the certificates. There was a roar of applause and the thrum of hundreds of cameras, but even in all of that Regulus could pick out the familiar whooping and cheering of his brother.

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"You'll be attending the governor's gala at the end of the month, won't you?" Walburga asked as she glanced into the mirror of her compact. Her tone let him know that she wasn't really asking.

"Yes, Mother."

He stared out of the limousine window, wishing that the drive was already over. Dinner with his parents had been mostly pleasant but all he really wanted was to veg out with Severus and a bottle of wine. He had been severely disappointed when Sirius disappeared immediately after the ceremony without a single word to him and wanted to get comforted. Walburga and Orion would be no good at that, so he didn't even bother to bring it up.

"That's good. Bellatrix and Narcissa will be there and I want to show you off properly."

He didn't respond, but glanced over at his father. The man was focused on his phone, thumbs tapping away on the screen. Was it a new mistress? Or was he kissing the ass of some executive?

"Smart and beautiful," Walburga continued as she dabbed a bit of powder on the tip of her nose. "Cygnus and Druella could only dream of having a child like you."

Regulus chose not to mention that Bellatrix as the eldest of the cousins had earned her Master's degree well before he had and even had a Miss California title to her name. An MBA, however, did not rank as high in Walburga's mind as his Master of Science in Chemistry with a focus on Biology and Pharmaceuticals. Although he was far more interested in the field of consumer goods, Regulus had taken the extra courses in Pharmaceuticals to assuage his mother in case, heaven forbid, he decided to move into the medical field. A doctor in the family was just what they needed to add more legitimacy to their esteemed name, but for now he was able to keep them content with his position as researcher.

"Let us know if you need any more money," Orion drawled lightly as they pulled up to the apartment complex.

"Yes, Father."

Kisses were pressed against cheeks and he was soon free from the confines of their vehicle and out into the wind-swept air. With a contented sigh, Regulus made his way to the stairs and began pondering all the ways he could drive Severus crazy. While they hadn't gone *all the way* yet, he had recently discovered the joys of giving head and absolutely adored the way that the usually stoic man would unravel during those intimate moments. No one else knew just how vocal Severus could be or what wondrously lovely faces he would make in the throes of passion, and it made Regulus' head swim in pleasure.

In fact, Regulus was so caught up in his mental fantasy that he failed to see the person sitting next to the stairs on his landing.

"Hiya, Reggie."

Regulus shrieked in surprise before clamping a hand over his mouth to silence the humiliating sound. He looked off to the side and saw a somewhat bemused Sirius Black sitting by the stairs with his long legs stretched out in front of his body.

"Fuck, Sirius," he gasped as he tried to get his breathing back under control.

"Fuck yourself," Sirius chuckled in response as he got to his feet. Regulus noted his shaking hands

and felt a wave of dread.

"What do you need?" he asked a bit more sharply than he intended.

Sirius' constant abuse of every drug known to mankind was pretty well known among the socialites. Regulus immediately saw his brother's face fall and felt ashamed. This was his brother, disowned or not, and Regulus loved him.

"I just wanted to stay with you for a bit," he mumbled as he looked down at his scuffed up boots. Everything seemed scruffy on Sirius, but the man's natural charisma made it all seem so pretty anyway.

"I'm sorry." Regulus moved forward and rested a hand on his brother's elbow. "I didn't mean for my words to come off like that, I just...well, Mother and Father just dropped me off..."

"Ah, I get it," he shrugged, but his face still wore the hurt. "Anyway, I can just go if you'd rather-"

"No!" Regulus interrupted. It had been years since he last talked with Sirius and he wanted to get a chance for a proper visit. "Come on, let's go in the apartment before someone catches sight of us."

"Yeah, okay."

A timid smile curled on those lips that had kissed seemingly every man and woman in Hollywood. It had been another fruit of the gossiping grape vine.

When Regulus stepped into the apartment, he froze as he caught sight of Severus seated on the couch in his sleep clothes and reading a thick book about algae. He had forgotten that Sirius, or anyone really, didn't know about his current living arrangements with Severus and it was really too late to try to think up of any excuse or prepare Severus.

"Welcome ho-" Severus froze as he took in the sight of the two brothers and Sirius let out a low whistle and glanced at his younger brother with a raised eyebrow.

"Nice legs," Sirius shot flirtatiously to the embarrassed man making Severus drop his book in an attempt to hide his boxer briefs.

"I'm so sorry, Sev," Regulus apologized before wheeling on his brother. "None of that in here, Sirius! I don't want you making him feel uncomfortable!"

"Hey, it was just a bit of harmless flirting," Sirius stated innocently with his hands up in the I-give-up gesture.

Severus scrambled into their shared bedroom to get on some trousers and Regulus tried not to get too irritated. Sirius had been a shameless flirt since he was a toddler so he probably didn't even realize that he was doing it or that some normal people might feel uncomfortable with it.

"He doesn't like that, so please don't flirt with him anymore."

Sirius glanced over at the shut bedroom door and back at his brother. "Are you two dating? I mean, I'm half naked all the time but you were always picky about that kind of stuff."

The blush was burning on his cheeks before he could think of any words and it was answer enough for his amused older brother.

"Don't tell our parents," he finally squeaked out.

A soft grin was back on those lips and Sirius was affectionately ruffling Regulus' hair. "Of course not. You could have a whole harem in here and I wouldn't care. I don't go out of my way to talk to them anyway."

"Um, okay. Let me show you the guest bedroom."

After providing a quick tour of the modest apartment, Severus was back out and dressed in joggers and a t-shirt but still looking scandalized. Sirius didn't seem to have brought anything with him, so Regulus set him up with toiletries and offered some of his own clothing. He really wanted to ask why Sirius wasn't staying at a hotel or why he didn't bring anything with him, but it just didn't seem to be the right time. After a few more short words, they were all dressed for bed and lounging on the couch with the bottle of wine being passed among the three of them. Severus settled for a glass, but Regulus and Sirius just drank straight from the bottle.

They talked about the current political landscape, the work he and Severus had been doing recently, and any topic that didn't broach the subject of celebrities and Hollywood in general. Regulus had seen the recent news and heard about the scathing commentary from late night hosts and comedians regarding his brother's erratic behavior lately, especially the fit of rage he had during his most recent filming. He had worried for his brother and the trouble that always came with drugs, but he again didn't know how he could bring that up since they hadn't had a conversation in a few years.

"Are you dating anyone?" he asked carefully before taking a pull on the bottle.

Sirius stared blankly at the television as he reached over and snatched the bottle back up. "Nope. Just broke up."

"Oh." Well, he walked right on top of that landmine. "I'm sorry to hear that."

The taller man shrugged. "I'm the one who broke things off. It's not a big deal." His desperate gulps of the tart liquid spoke otherwise. "Anyway, I'm just planning on being here for a few days if that's okay. I won't be in your way for long."

Regulus shot a worried glance to Severus before turning his attention back to his brother. "You can stay as long as you need to, Sirius. We don't mind, and I've missed you."

A bitter smile now curled on those lips. "Sure, Reggie."

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Having his brother in the apartment was uncomfortable enough that Regulus couldn't even imagine trying to sneakily engage in any kind of sexual activities with his boyfriend, but he tried to comfort himself with the thought that it was only for a short while and that Sirius would be gone before he knew it. He was surprised to find Sirius a rather quiet guest, even when he drank himself into a stupor. It was as if he was too tired to deal with the manic episodes of drunkenness and it was possible that he hadn't even brought any drugs with him. But there was something about his visit that didn't sit very well with Regulus and the more he talked to Severus about it the more worried he got.

Sirius Black had always been the life of the party, a true extrovert who lived for the spotlight. It made it very easy to get him into modeling as a toddler and Walburga and Orion's connections with Hollywood from their days as actors lent to a fast-track into child acting. Sirius ate it up like candy, and Regulus could always pull up his earliest memories because those were the happiest days of his life. Those were memories of sitting on the side while Sirius acted out the scene as needed or

stood for the photo shoots, and soon enough Regulus was right there with him. They were barely a year apart and looked almost like twins - it was a feature that many directors took advantage of, even going so far as casting them in a gender-swapped version of the Parent Trap. Regulus had never really cared for the fawning and attention for others, really only seeking approval from his big brother but Sirius always seemed to need the affirmation from anyone and everyone.

But as he stayed in the apartment, this Sirius was somber and quiet. Sleeping for hours and only getting up to nibble at food and down copious amounts of alcohol. He didn't even feel the need to fill the silence of the apartment with his chatter or singing, something that Regulus clearly remembered from their time in Grimmauld Place. Mother had even invested considerable money in getting Sirius vocal training because if he couldn't shut up then she expected him to at least sing on key. Now Regulus didn't even know if he had kept up with any of the training or even if he sang anymore. It had been at least five years since he had heard Sirius' singing voice, a memorable smokey haunting voice singing "Hallelujah" on their balcony with the glittering lights of LA shimmering behind him.

Before he could build up enough confidence to ask Sirius if there was anything wrong it was time for his graduation ceremony. Unlike the awards ceremony, this was a large affair with thousands of people. Walburga and Orion had procured a security team to keep them protected from the rest of the crowd, but when asked Sirius had just shrugged and stated that he would be fine with his borrowed clothes from Regulus. The jeans were too short so Sirius rolled the cuffs to expose even more of his ankles and wore his leather jacket over the borrowed shirt in order to keep all of his tattoos covered up. With his hair up in a messy bun and oversized sunglasses perched atop his nose the casually sloven look was complete.

Severus had kept from saying much about anything while they were in the apartment but in the comfort of the crowd of anxious graduates he felt more comfortable about talking with Regulus.

"How long do you think your brother is going to be staying with us?" he whispered as they stood huddled together and watching the mass of students puttering about until they were to be called into their lines for the march.

"I don't know," he replied softly, thin fingers checking his ornery hair again. "Is him being in our apartment really bothering you?"

Severus' lips twisted into a grimace and Regulus knew that he was trying to filter his initial pessimistic response into something a bit more palatable. It had taken years of interactions to get to this point, something that was worth every argument and discussion.

"You know that I don't like others around in general, but it's not really that so much as...is he okay? I mean, does he see someone or have someone to go to?" He took a quick breath and stared at his feet as if he expected Regulus to argue with him.

"Do you mean, like, a therapist?"

Severus shrugged. "I don't know. Someone? Therapist, boyfriend, girlfriend, other friends? Not your parents, obviously."

Regulus felt the blush burning on his face. "I...don't really know. I mean, he said that he just broke up with his boyfriend, so maybe he just needs some space? An apartment by a university is a far cry from his usual haunts and maybe he's just hiding out. Is that...okay? I mean, I didn't ask you ahead of time about any of this and I'm sorry."

He grimaced at the thought of Severus being upset with him over this, but he had never been asked



for anything by his brother and he really didn't want to say no.

"It's...well I'm not exactly comfortable doing anything around him and I miss you." His hand slipped into Regulus' beneath their billowing sleeves and gave it a soft squeeze. "And he makes me nervous. About things."

This was new, and Regulus felt his eyebrows scrunch together.

"About what, Sev? Has he been saying anything mean or stupid to you?"

"No, it's not that." The dark eyes finally looked up to stare into the grey ones. "My mom suffered from mental disorders including some pretty severe depression. Seeing him has just reminded me of things from back then."

"Oh," Regulus groaned softly as he took Severus' other hand in his and risked stepping closer. "I'm so sorry."

Severus shrugged and gave a good impression of not being bothered about it, but Regulus knew better.

"Anyway, I hope he's got someone. And that he can leave soon."

The taller of the two black-haired boys chuckled and leaned in for a quick kiss. "He sleeps like the dead, Sev, so maybe I can go down on you tonight."

The blush on Severus' cheeks was worth it even if they didn't actually get to any sexual intimacy until Sirius left.

The music started up and everyone got into the lines as they were supposed to and everything passed by in more or less of a blur. The time spent sitting through speeches seemed like an eternity, but the very moment of stepping onto the stage and getting hooded passed by far more quickly than he would have liked. For all those countless hours spent suffering over imprinting new information into his brain and working over a microscope and learning all there was to know about algae and the chemical byproducts and the process of developing products...for all of that the five second walk across the stage and recognition was pretty anticlimactic.

He wasn't able to see any of his family in the massive cheering crowd, but Regulus hoped that Sirius wouldn't just disappear. He hoped that Sirius would be back at the apartment and maybe he could finally find out what was bothering his brother so much.

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Sirius took a deep draw of whiskey and Regulus wondered if he would have to go out to buy some more alcohol before the end of the week. His supply usually lasted Regulus and Severus a couple of months but he had already gone shopping for more earlier in the week and was looking at another booze run soon. His head didn't feel the greatest either from the constant binge drinking, but he felt badly about the thought of leaving Sirius to drink alone.

"Don't you ever get tired of all the shit that goes with acting?" he asked tiredly as he stared into his own glass of amber liquid.

Now that Severus was in bed he didn't feel too weird about asking these personal questions. The topic of their shared acting experiences hadn't really come up since he gave up the craft in his early teen years, especially after Sirius' spectacular falling out with their parents when he was 16 years old. In fact, there wasn't much at all that they talked about after that. Nothing beyond the usual

bland pleasantries or an occasional shared joke. It was sad to realize that Regulus didn't even really know who his brother was anymore.

Sirius shrugged as he stared at the half-empty bottle. "Yeah, I get tired of it all the time."

"Then why do you keep doing it? Why not leave and start fresh with something different?"

At this, his brother snorted in amusement. "Like what? Get into geeky science like you? You know that I don't have the patience for shit like that."

"It doesn't have to be science," Regulus pressed, feeling oddly compelled to talk his brother out of going back to the same life that left him type-casted as the eternally bumbling asshole with far more good looks than good sense. That same life that left his brother drinking heavily and doing all manner of illegal drugs every minute he wasn't on set. "You're talented in a lot of different ways. You could even switch over to making music if you wanted to stay close to the same social circles."

"Nah," Sirius replied easily before taking another gulp. "It's fine."

Was it really fine if it was making him miserable?

"Sirius," he sighed in a mixture of annoyance and apprehension before grabbing the bottle and refilling his glass, "why do you even stay there? You hate acting."

Bloodshot eyes turned towards him with a strangely blank expression.

"What makes you think that I hate acting?"

This surprised the young man. For as much as Sirius loved being the center of attention and putting on a show, Regulus had always remembered the fights his parents and Sirius would get into about having to go to the studios or to the galas or even the different sets. There were so many arguments that he thought it was pretty clear and obvious how much Sirius hated acting. His name wasn't plastered all over the gossip columns because of his love for the ancient craft either, but for his degenerating behavior and crazy lifestyle, neither of which insinuated a particular love for the work he did or the life he led.

"You've never once acted like you enjoyed it," he stated simply. "You always argued about going to the studios and stuff and people typically aren't drunks and druggies if they are happy with their lives."

He grimaced into his cup after that last sentence spilled out and he regretted it immediately. That was a bit too on-the-nose of a statement than he usually bothered with, but his drunken brain wasn't too concerned with being careful and kind. Regardless, Sirius wore a hurt expression that quickly melted away into his strangely apathetic expression.

"I don't hate acting," he stated calmly and quietly, those grey eyes boring into his brother's. "In fact, it's one of the few things I enjoy anymore."

Regulus rose his eyebrows in surprise. How could anyone enjoy those ridiculous roles that Sirius usually stuck to these days?

"Why's that, Sirius?"

"Because it's one of the few escapes that works anymore," he replied softly and Regulus felt that strange pit in his stomach. "For those few days of a shoot, it doesn't matter how stupid or

ridiculous, I can be someone else. Someone who's life has been nothing like mine."

He wasn't sure if it was the tone that Sirius was using or the strange look in those eyes that was making him more nervous, but Regulus took another few gulps of the burning nectar.

"What's been so bad about your life?" he asked in a whisper. He knew of the arguments and the family breaking apart, that was obvious, but Sirius was trying to tell him something and he just wasn't understanding it yet. "What are you hiding from?"

For a short moment he wondered if Sirius would even answer him. Why should he? They hadn't spoken in years or even been around each other in that time. Why should he share deeply personal thoughts or experiences?

"Because it was never the acting I was running from," Sirius replied calmly. "It was always the people."

This didn't really help clear the confusion and the younger brother was beginning to wonder if Sirius could even make sense anymore. Had the drugs and the alcohol already turned his brain into mush? Surely that was the case with as much as he was purported to be taking. There were plenty of articles about Sirius being found in people's yards totally smashed out of his mind or getting thrown into jail for another intoxicated brawl.

"They were always nice when we were young," he huffed instead, turning to focus on his drink again. It was silly to think that he could have a decent conversation with his brother.

"Do you remember the big fight I had with Walburga and Orion? The one about the French movie you were supposed to do?"

Regulus snorted in irritation. Of course he remembered that.

"Yes, I do remember that, Sirius. You pitched an absolute fit that they wanted to cast me for the role instead of you and you had a temper tantrum until Mother and Father gave in and told the director that they weren't going to let me do it. I actually wanted that role, you ass."

Sirius stared at him for a few moments longer, his misty grey eyes more sober than they had a right to be at this point. "Do you remember what I kept telling them?"

Tilting his eyes up in thought, Regulus dredged up the unpleasant memory and tried to remember the words coming out of his hysterical brother's mouth. He remembered the tears and absolute fury issued forth from that young mouth, the boy barely 13 and already spitting vitriol. Regulus had been so shocked by his brother's outburst at the news of the director's choice because even though they had both tried out together for many different things it was almost unheard of for Regulus to win out over his brother. He knew that he wasn't as beautiful or vivacious, but he had always thought that he had a certain air about him that made him a bit more of an old-soul. Regulus had wanted that role, a film where he would be required to speak both English and French and a role that was exploring the growing up of a young boy during wartime. The director was well known for his award-winning films and Regulus just knew this was his opportunity to finally make a name for himself separate from his brother.

And Sirius had ruined that for him.

"You kept telling them that you would go to the press," he mumbled as he searched through his memory of the incident. "Which was a totally stupid threat to use against them as the press wouldn't care which sibling was cast in the role. That's just how business goes."

Apparently, that had been the wrong thing to say.

Sirius was on his feet immediately, a look so full of venom and hate that Regulus felt his breath knocked right out of him. Never in his life had he been on the receiving end of such a look from his brother and his mouth open and closed like a stupid fish as he tried to come up with some response that would take the words back and calm his brother down. The taller man threw the bottle of whiskey against the wall, frightening Regulus even more and paced around the room angrily while making the most frightening inhuman sounds he had ever heard. It was like he was choking back an animalistic scream of rage and horror and...something else. Wheeling around on Regulus he was barely getting any breath through the shallow gasps he was taking.

"You utter shit," Sirius hissed, finger jabbing at his brother. "You sit there on your fucking couch comfortable and happy and so full of your fucking self and you have no idea!"

"W-wha-?"

There were tears welling in Sirius' eyes now and Regulus felt as if all his brain cells were refusing to work properly, refusing to see what Sirius was trying to show him and yet knowing that he knew the truth of the matter. Something he had purposefully tucked away.

"I took that fucking job because Director LeStrange liked to fuck his boys in the ass!" The words landed on Regulus' chest like a ten ton sledgehammer. "I took that fucking shit of a movie because he had his damned eyes on you and your virgin mouth and ass and he wanted to fucking break you in!!!"

"No," Regulus whispered, but the tears on Sirius' face were not lying.

"He didn't want to have a used up boy like me on the set," Sirius spat out angrily, "not when he could get virgin ass! And they were going to fucking let you! Walburga and Orion!" The names of their parents were spit out like the most vile of substances. "Anything to get another award in their fucking shelf! They let all those men and women do those things to me, so why not you too?! But I wasn't going to fucking let them!"

The glass of whiskey slipped from his numb fingers and spilled out onto the floor. All those times he had stared up at the awards lining the front hallway of their home, jealous that Sirius brought in the most; all those times he had cursed his brother's name and shed angry tears over losing what he felt was his best chance to make it out from under his brother's shadow; all those times he watched his mother carefully polishing each and every crystal and gold relic - everything took on a different shade.

"B-but, they..."

He didn't know what to say at the words being thrown so violently against him now, the accusations that hung in the air like acrid sulfur. It wasn't that he wanted to argue and dispute, but he just couldn't think of anything else to say or do. Those manic eyes were so full of hurt and hate, a depth of which Regulus had never seen before. It was a frightening reminder of how good an actor his brother actually was, despite the silly roles he tended to take for the past few years. Roles that he now saw in a different light - characters that were confident and happy regardless of how stupid or horrible they were, people who did the hurting rather than be the ones to receive the hurt.

"It started back with the modeling gigs," he whispered harshly and Regulus felt the bile rising in his throat. "And it kept going on, getting worse and worse. I hated those galas so much because Walburga and Orion would purposefully not give a damn when one of those men would take me off to another room. Nobody noticed the kid disappearing in a large crowd to get fucked for a few

minutes before being thrown back out there if I was lucky. Or the times that there would be more than one."

His voice cracked and shaking hands came up to cover his eyes, desperately trying to block the images from his mind that he couldn't escape.

"Fuck," Regulus choked in horror. "Fucking hell, Sirius."

So many memories looked different now, and Regulus wondered how he had ever imagined a carefree and blessed childhood for the two of them. How had he ever imagined that his brother was nothing but an ungrateful and entitled brat who just loved to kick against the goads for the hell of it? All those times that Sirius would hold his hand in a death-grip at events and wear his protective glower.

"That's just how business goes," Sirius spat back and Regulus felt even more horrified at his thoughtless words.

"I didn't know," he whispered uselessly.

"Just fucking business," it was murmured again before Sirius wiped angrily at his eyes and stomped out of the apartment without a backwards glance.

Regulus stared at the wet spot on the floor where his glass tumbler had dropped and the tears began to race down his face as the sobs bubbled up in his throat. It took him a few moments to realize that a pair of warm arms had wrapped around his shoulders and the familiar scent of the expensive shampoo and conditioner that he made Severus use because it was so good for his hair.

"Are you okay?" Severus asked quietly.

He didn't know how to answer that. How much had his boyfriend heard? How was one supposed to respond to getting a bombshell like that dropped on them? And the guilt! Oh the guilt of learning that your own brother protected you by sacrificing his own body and the horror of learning that your own flesh and blood parents hadn't cared enough about that. That they *knew* and let it continue. That only the threat of losing their perfectly crafted image was what kept them from pushing him into all of those experiences as well. How would anyone feel?

"I don't know," he whispered as he hugged his knees more tightly.

What even was the joy of his academic achievements in the light of this revelation? All that money he had accepted from his parents, the times he rolled his eyes along with them after hearing about another gossip column listing Sirius' newest transgressions, the focus and effort he put into something like chemistry all while never knowing the true cost of his success. Could he have survived such abuse and still moved on well enough to get into the same educational program? Would he have been motivated enough to graduate high school years early so that he could jump straight into his collegiate work and would he have ever met Severus?

The sobbing started all over again as he thought about all of his awkward firsts with Severus, the bumbling joy of discovery with a man that he loved. He had spent a lot of time fantasizing about how their first time going all the way would be and it had always been a warm and joyful coupling. Sirius had never had a choice in the matter. It started when he was so young, so fucking young! Why would anyone want to hurt a *child* like that?! Did he even remember his first times? Were they branded into his mind like festering wounds that would never heal?

"Shhhh," Severus soothed as he awkwardly moved around Regulus and settled onto the couch next

to the crying young man. He pulled Regulus back against him and wrapped his arms tightly around his shuddering boyfriend.

"I did that to him," he managed to choke out only for Severus to squeeze him protectively.

"No, you didn't," Severus responded firmly. "You were a child and knew nothing."

"I should have," Regulus whispered miserably as his brain pulled up different memories of him watching Sirius being taken away for extra "talks" with people and how stupidly jealous he had been even when he saw the anxious expressions on his brother's face. Or the times on set that he was made to go sit in the trailer while Sirius got extra "coaching" from the director or producers.

"You can't do this," Severus whispered before pressing a kiss against his temple. "Regulus, you can't start down that road or it'll take you to a place that you don't want to go. There's only hurt and no healing there."

"Then what am I supposed to do?"

At this question, Severus took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. "Crying is good, I think."

Regulus chuckled wetly as he looked up into his boyfriend's dark and caring eyes before he found himself curling up so that he could settle against the man's bony chest. Even if he was the taller one between the two of them which made curling down against Severus' chest awkward, he had always found comfort in listening to that steady heartbeat.

"I can't pretend that I don't know," he whispered against the jersey material of Severus' shirt.

"Mothe-shit, I don't even want to call them my parents anymore."

Severus ran his fingers through the ebony curls. "Honestly, I don't know what to say."

"What did you hear?"

"The shouting and breaking glass woke me up. I think that I got it all."

There was a silence between them that was scattered with sniffles and sighs.

"I'll leave a note on the door for if he wants to come back," Regulus finally muttered. He didn't know if he was going to be able to sleep tonight, but the thought of being back in their shared bed was a comforting thought. "If he doesn't come back tonight, I want to go find him tomorrow. Is that okay?"

"I'll help you," Severus muttered softly. "He's your brother, so I'll help with anything."

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It was a shock to Regulus to find his brother asleep on the couch in the morning. He hadn't slept well at all through the night, so he was surprised that his brother managed to get into the apartment without him noticing. Grey eyes wandered over the body of his brother, the usual angles and scruffy edges all still in place. His still-unshaven face was covered with the start of a beard and a purple bruise was darkening on his cheekbone. His knuckles were filthy and scabbed with fresh wounds and the younger Black brother wondered if he had gotten those punching walls or other people. The fact that Sirius wasn't currently sitting in jail again made him think that it was probably a wall.

Sighing softly, he moved about the kitchen as quietly as he could and prepared a nice hot breakfast

with some strong coffee.

The day passed rather oddly. He hadn't known how to bring up the conversation from last night and Sirius acted like it had never happened. In fact, he was acting rather strange considering his quiet and somber behavior recently. While Severus had to be off for work at the library and then Chemistry Department, Regulus stayed home with his brother. This Sirius was more like the brother he had once imagined he knew - happy, almost hyper, always cracking jokes, and relentless in his determination to bring a smile to Regulus' lips. They played card games and rounds of chess. They ordered in a lot of greasy food and reminisced about bloopers and fun behind-the-scenes shenanigans. Sirius told him about some of the new up-and-coming stars and their little quirks. He even had a good laugh when he told Regulus about the offer he received to be on some reality show about stars going through rehab.

Regulus wasn't sure how to take everything. His brother was truly acting like he was happy and that he really didn't care about what people said about him, but was it just that? Acting? He would laugh as he told Regulus the story behind one of the most recent gossip-column scandals, about how he had been photographed sneaking out of a starlette's house. He had been involved with her and her boyfriend, no secret affairs. But there was that time he was having a secret affair with that actress thirty years his senior. Everything was spoken lightheartedly, as if this was all *normal*. As if this was all that his life was, but Regulus couldn't help but see a glaringly large hole in all their discussions.

"Who were you dating until the breakup last week?" he finally gathered the courage to ask.

Sirius was stir-frying some food, a skill that had shocked and impressed Regulus. The elder Black didn't seem like the type to know how to cook.

"Ah, no one you would know."

"He or she? Or they?"

"Him." Sirius scrunched his nose before settling on adding more sauce. After a few quiet minutes focusing on the food he seemed to decide that sharing a little more information on the guy wasn't a big deal. "His name was Remus. How weird is that? That's like, Black family level of weird. Anyway, great guy."

"Why'd you break up?" Regulus winced at his poor manners. He wasn't even slobbering drunk this time, just infernally curious and blunt.

The food was plated sloppily before Sirius tossed the pan into the sink noisily. "When does your boyfriend get home?"

"A couple of hours."

Sirius took a couple of bites of food. "I had my reasons. For the breakup, I mean. But...none of it really had to do with him. He's great. Definitely deserves better."

Regulus carefully reached out a hand and patted his brother's hand softly. "I'm sorry, Sirius. And I'm sorry that I don't know what to do."

The older Black just shrugged. "It's not like we were raised to know how to handle shit like this. But it's fine."

After dinner Sirius stepped out into the balcony to watch the sunset with his little brother. Everything felt so relaxed and nice even in the blistering heat, and Regulus nudged his brother in

the leg.

"Do you still sing some?"

"Yeah," he replied with a cough. "Bit shaky and not exactly great but yeah, I still sing."

"Well, get on with it," Regulus demanded and Sirius couldn't help but laugh. It all felt so strangely familiar. A ghost of the best of their childhood.

Slate grey eyes stared up at the sky for a moment as he decided on the song and then he sat on the railing with a casual disregard that had Regulus' heart nearly leaping out of his chest.

*"Tell me something, girl," he started quietly and Regulus' breath caught in his throat. "Are you happy in this modern world..."*

*Or do you need more  
Is there something else you're searching for?  
I'm falling  
In all the good times  
I find myself longing  
for change  
And in the bad times I fear myself*

*Tell me something boy  
Aren't you tired trying to fill that void?  
Or do you need more  
Ain't it hard keeping it so hardcore?  
I'm falling  
In all the good times  
I find myself longing  
for change  
And in the bad times I fear myself*

While Regulus wasn't exactly up on modern pop songs, he immediately recognized the lyrics and watched in quiet awe as his brother sung his heart out. The words were heavy with personal meaning and as the vocalizations started Regulus was shocked to feel the tears rolling down his cheeks. If he knew the words he would have jumped in to harmonize and feel that connection with his brother. How did he ever feel complacent with the distance that had split between them? Reaching out, Regulus entwined his fingers with his brother and let the song wash over him.

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Grumbling as he shuffled through the apartment, Regulus cursed out whoever thought that a freakin' Saturday morning was a good time to be banging on someone's door. He noted in confusion that Sirius wasn't on the couch and that the door to the spare room was open revealing an empty room. Did the fool get drunk and locked out?

"Sirius, I'm going to kill-"

The words died immediately on his lips as he stared at the unfamiliar young man standing nervously in front of him.

"Um, so sorry to bother you," he started shakily, "but is Sirius here?"

Regulus' face melted into the unreadable mask that he had so many years to perfect. "My brother



lives his own life and I am not involved in it. Please go bother someone else. You might have better luck with our parents."

"Sirius would never go back to them!" the young man insisted and his tone held a bit of desperation. Not exactly normal paparazzi behavior and there didn't even seem to be a camera on him at all. "Please, is he here? Has he been staying here?"

Rubbing blearily at his eyes, the half-dressed man tried to decide how to handle this guy.

"Look, I don't know-"

"My name is Remus," the other man blurted out and Regulus immediately stiffened. "I don't know what Sirius has told you, but please I need to talk to him." Tears welled in his eyes and he shuffled nervously again. "I'm so scared for him and I want to make sure that he's okay!"

"What? Why are you scared?"

Remus waved his arms around in exasperation, as if he was struggling to find the right words. Regulus studied the young man and wondered how this guy had even met Sirius much less ended up as his boyfriend. He was wearing rather worn second-hand clothes, had crooked teeth, scars slashed all over his face, and a terrible hair cut that was probably meant to try to hide the scars. He was gangly and seemed to be naturally clumsy, and there didn't seem to be anything remotely attractive about him besides the wide hazel eyes.

"Please, I don't know what he's told you, but he needs to get some professional help!"

This made Regulus bristle angrily. "Please leave," he snapped. "My brother's business is none of your concern. He knows what he's doing."

Shockingly, Remus began to sob right there at his door and the young Heir stood stupidly watching on.

"P-please," the lanky man hiccuped. "He l-left me a note, and I'm so fucking scared. I t-tried to find you as quickly as I could."

A crumpled paper was shoved at him and Regulus took it with shaky hands. His eyes widened as he read through it and he felt sick to his stomach.

"Fuck," he whispered before grabbing Remus and dragging him into the apartment.

Setting the note down Regulus called 911 and hoped to any deities that might exist that they could tell him what to do and maybe help him find his brother. Sloppy letters stared up mockingly at him, words that were indeed an attempt at a breakup, but also words that were far more like a goodbye. Regulus looked back on the last few days with his brother, how down he had been and thoughtful and then the complete change after the truth of his abuse came out. Sirius had been saying goodbye.

At first he tried to be discreet while in communication with the police, but soon Regulus was too desperate to care what news people might pick up or report. All he cared about was finding his brother and getting him somewhere safe. He used every inch of leverage he could with his family name and hoped that for once it would do some good for something that mattered.

Two hours into the search the report came in and Regulus collapsed into tears.

\*\*\*\*

"I don't know what to say," Regulus murmured as he wiped at his eyes for the hundredth time that morning.

The police officer standing in front of him shrugged in embarrassment and offered a weak smile. "I'm sorry that things got this bad, but I was glad to have been there."

Both of them looked through the glass and into the room where Sirius was curled up on his side of a hospital bed, asleep on some sedatives and Remus was seated next to him and clutching his hand.

"He'd be dead right now if you hadn't been there," Regulus choked, hating the way his brother looked so frail. "I...Mr. Potter, I can never thank you enough."

"You can call me James," the officer insisted. His kind brown eyes took in the sight of the sleeping man. "And you don't need to thank me. All I did was listen and remind him that there were people who cared for him. He made the choice to step away from the edge and that choice was made in large part because you do care about him. I'm just...I'm glad that he had people who cared. Not everyone does."

Both men stood in the hall and continued to watch through the glass. Regulus had already contacted his lawyers to be put as the temporary guardian over his brother and had gotten the process started to get Sirius into intensive treatment as soon as he was released from the suicide watch in the hospital. A lot of it would still depend on Sirius, but Regulus was going to do everything in his power to give his brother a chance to get clean and find peace from the lifetime of trauma. If that meant legal action against every disgusting fuck that touched him or coerced him, or therapy for life, or something else - Regulus was going to have his back.

From the looks of it, this Remus was probably going to be there every step of the way too.

He could only hope.

## End Notes

Title and lyrics are from the song "Shallows" by Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper

I've been sitting on this story for a bit trying to wrangle the ending into how I envisioned it, but sometimes you've just got to be happy with what you've got and put it out there anyway.  
<3

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